

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 00471 131915Z

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SUBJECT: SOVIET MEASURES TO PRODUCE VISIBLE COMPLIANCE WITH CSCE

REF: 75MOSCOW 18425, MOSCOW 0111, MOSCOW 0249

1. VISITORS' PASSPORT FEES REDUCED -
TWO SOVIET NON-IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICANTS, RESIDENTS OF LITHUANIA, INFORMED CONSULAR OFFICER JANUARY 12 THAT SOVIET PASSPORTS FOR PRIVATE FOREIGN TRAVEL BECAME CONSIDERABLY LESS EXPENSIVE AS OF JANUARY 1, 1976. ONE OF THE APPLICANTS, A RUSSIAN WOMAN RESIDENT OF LITHUANIA, TOLD CONSOFF THAT SHE PAID 261 RUBLES FOR THE PASSPORT, INSTEAD OF THE 361 RUBLES CHARGED BEFORE JANUARY 1. THE OTHER APPLICANT, A LITHUANIAN WOMAN, TOLD CONSOFF THAT SHE HAD OBTAINED HER PASSPORT BEFORE NEW YEAR'S, AND THEREFORE HAD TO PAY THE 361 RUBLES FEE. BUT SHE KNEW THAT THE FEE DROPPED BY 100 RUBLES ON NEW YEAR'S DAY. NO OTHER APPLICANTS HAVE YET APPEARED AT EMBASSY WHO HAVE OBTAINED PASSPORTS DATED AFTER JANUARY 1.

THIS MAY BE THE FIRST STEP TOWARD LOWERING THE FEES FOR OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION FOR PRIVATE FOREIGN TRAVEL
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 00471 131915Z

PER CSCE. THE 40 RUBLE FEE FOR EXIT PERMISSION HAS

APPARENTLY NOT BEEN CHANGED. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE PRICE OF FOREIGN TRAVEL DOCUMENTS FOR PRIVATE VISITORS, AND WILL INFORM DEPARTMENT SHOULD THE PASSPORT FEE ALSO PROVE TO BE LOWERED FOR INTENDING EMIGRANTS.

2. EXIT PERMIT PRACTICES LIBERALIZED-

ON FOUR SEPARATE OCCASIONS IN THE LAST MONTH, EMIGRANTS HAVE INFORMED EMBASSY THAT OVIR IN YEREVAN HAS CHANGED THE DESTINATION IN THEIR FOREIGN TRAVEL PASSPORTS FROM LEBANON TO US. THE SOVIET BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURE OF GRANTING EXIT PERMISSION TO A PARTICULAR COUNTRY HAS CREATED SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS FOR SOME EMIGRANTS BECAUSE OF THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE ENTRY VISA OF THE COUNTRY TO WHICH EXIT PERMISSION IS GRANTED BE IN THE PASSPORT PRIOR TO DEPARTURE. SINCE COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRANCE AND LEBANON CURRENTLY REFUSE TO ISSUE SUCH VISAS TO SOVIETS, PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS WHO RECEIVE EXIT PERMISSION FOR THESE COUNTRIES MUST ASK OVIR TO CHANGE THE DESTINATION ENTERED ON SOVIET PASSPORTS. IN THE PAST, OVIRS HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO CHANGE THE COUNTRY OF DESTINATION, THEREBY LEAVING SOME PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS INDEFINITELY STRANDED. IF THE RECENT CASES SIGNAL A SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE COUNTRY OF DESTINATION MORE READILY, MANY SOVIETS NOW HOLDING EXIT PERMISSION FOR COUNTRIES CLOSED TO THEM MAY RECEIVE A SECOND CHANCE TO EMIGRATE.

3. COMMENT: THE ABOVE DEVELOPMENTS ARE FURTHER INDICATIONS THAT SOVIETS MAY BE ADAPTING THEIR LAW AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A RECORD OF COMPLIANCE WITH AT LEAST SOME CSCE PROVISIONS PER MOSCOW 0249, WITH VIEW TO ESTABLISHING A RECORD WHICH MAY BE CITED TO DEMONSTRATE SOVIET COMPLIANCE WITH CSCE.

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